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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 000350

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AJ](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: ACTION ALONG THE ARMENIA AZERBAIJAN BORDER  
INTENSIFYING

REF: YEREVAN 322

Classified By: DCM A.F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) Cease-fire violations along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan have intensified over the last several weeks, according to news reports confirmed by Deputy Minister of Defense General-Lieutenant Artur Aghabekyan and Ministry of Foreign Affairs OSCE Desk Officer Head Varuzhan Nersissian. Nersissian said the increase in cease-fire violations began shortly after Rambouillet. Aghabekyan attributed the action to Azeri attempts to slow the efforts of Armenian troops who are currently reinforcing and improving Armenian trenches and positions. End Summary.

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ACTION INTENSIFYING AFTER RAMBOUILLET  
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2. (C) Deputy Minister of Defense General-Lieutenant Artur Aghabekyan told us that an increase in cease-fire violations, reported in the Armenian press over the last few weeks, was likely attributable to recent provocative rhetoric from Azeri leaders after Rambouillet, Azeri attempts to gain ground along the line of contact, and Armenia's success "in improving and reinforcing" trenches and positions along the border with Azerbaijan and the line of contact. "The snow is melting, and as we improve the our positions along the line of defense, every man and every machine at every point along the border is a target," Aghabekyan said.

3. (C) According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs OSCE Desk Officer Varuzhan Nersissian, the cease-fire began "deteriorating" after Rambouillet. Over the last few weeks, he told us, the GOAM had recorded an increase in sniper fire around the Noyemberian (Northern Armenia) and Vayk (Southern Armenia) regions. "We hope this is not a trend, or the sign of a much larger action to come," Nersissian said.

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MOD ASSERTS UPSWING IN CEASE-FIRE INCIDENTS  
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4. (SBU) A March 7 Ministry of Defense press statement asserted "the Azeri side opened simultaneous fire" on various Armenian positions near Ijevan. Other recent statements available on the MOD's website listed locations, dates and times of alleged cease-fire violations (February 22 around 13:00 in Baghanis near Noyemberian; February 22 in Movses near Noyemberian; February 28 at 19:00 in Movses near Noyemberian; March 3 at 10:30 near Ijevan; March 3 at 11:00 near Ijevan; March 4 at 17:30 near Meghrab; March 5 from 00:20 to 04:40 near Ijevan; March 6 at 19:05 near Vayk; March 6 at 21:40 near Berd; March 7 at 02:50 near Ijevan; March 7 at 15:00 near Shorza). The statements claimed Armenian forces did not return fire during any of the incidents.

5. (SBU) The MOD press statements allege that Azeri cease-fire violations resulted in one injury ("shepherd Armen Karapetyan born in 1968") in Baghanis on February 22 and one death (Arsen Zakevosyan, an Armenian conscript) in Ijevan on March 3. Nersissian confirmed the incidents.

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COMMENT: TAKING NO CHANCES  
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6. (C) Following a similar decision by the United Nations Development Program, Post's Emergency Action Committee has declared a section of the Ijevan-Noyemberian Highway (in Northeastern Armenia along the Armenia Azerbaijan border and in the area of many of the reported cease-fire violations) off-limits for American citizen employees of the U.S. Government and their family members (reftel).  
EVANS